

## **Separate but Universal: The First Native Lodges in British India**

When the first masonic lodges were opened in India, they were confronted to unprecedented social, ethnic and religious diversity. Once the question of native participation was raised, local lodges were brought to define and redefine their entrance standards. Colonial India thus became an ideal laboratory in which the universality of freemasonry could be put to the test.

At the turn of the 18th century, only a mere handful of Indians had been initiated across the Indian subcontinent. The first was Umdat-ul-Umrah, the eldest son of the Nawab of Arcot and heir to the throne, initiated in 1776. Most of them were Muslim and were either political or trading partners of the British.

This trend was only reversed in 1843, with the creation of lodge *Rising Star of Western India* No. 342. This lodge of a new kind, was founded in Bombay, for the specific purpose of initiating natives. This new lodge allowed an unprecedented number of Indians to join freemasonry at a time when their eligibility was far from unanimous, thus furthering native participation.

However, the constitution of this 'native lodge' as it came to be known, was not without questioning the very foundation of masonic universalism. In its *Constitutions*, modern Freemasonry had claimed to be "the Centre of Union, and the means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have remain'd at a perpetual Distance"<sup>1</sup>. Yet, the constitution of a new lodge based on racial affiliation, seemed to imply a form of segregation, allowing European and native masons to share a common experience while keeping to themselves.

Following these paradoxical observations, this paper will examine the question of whether native lodges made a positive contribution to the universality of Freemasonry. In other words, should native lodges be considered as a further realization of the masonic universalist ideal, or should they be considered as a shortcoming, insofar as they upheld racial distinctions within the lodge system?

### ***I - A Genesis of Native Lodges in Colonial Bombay***

The first native lodge, *Rising Star of Western India*, resulted mainly from the rejection of an Indian candidate named Maneckji Cursetji. As early as 1840, this prominent member of the Bombay Parsi community had applied to Lodge *Perseverance* No. 546 E.C and was blackballed. Masonry in Bombay was then entirely European. The following year, he travelled to Europe in the hope of obtaining the Duke of Sussex' support, knowing that he had openly expressed sympathy for the cause of native participation. Unfortunately, Sussex was touring the continent and it is only once in Paris that Maneckji Cursetji saw the light, in lodge *La Gloire de l'Univers*. Once he was back in Bombay, Maneckji Cursetji was proposed as a joining member of Lodge *Perseverance*, which was now under the Scottish banner. But again, his application was rejected. Clearly, some members of the lodge were reluctant to sit side by side with an Indian, and the 'blackballing system' made exclusion on account racial affiliation possible because almost complete consensus was required for a candidate to be initiated.<sup>2</sup> This conferred a significant degree of autonomy on local lodges when it came to who they included and excluded.

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1 Cécile Révauger, *Noirs et francs-maçons* (Paris: Editions Maçonniques de France, 2003) 293.

2 Cohen, "Abner The Politics of Ritual Secrecy". *Man* 6.3, (1971): 427-448.

While some members of *Perseverance* clearly voted against Maneckji Cursetji, others were clearly favourable to welcoming him in the lodge. Many British masons were then particularly receptive to the liberal policies of 'world bettering', 'moral improvement', and 'sharing the benefits of civilization' that were then being implemented in India.<sup>3</sup> The Scottish Provincial Grand Master of Bombay, James Burnes, must have been one of them, because when 27 masons, including members of *Perseverance*, petitioned him to open a lodge for "the native gentlemen of recognized respectability and character of Bombay", he responded favourably, arguing that: "Although I have never contemplated anything approaching to the free admission of natives into the Craft, I have long looked forward to the time when in the spread of civilization and to aid its progress it would be becoming or rather imperative on us, as enlightened men and masons, to throw our portals open to particular individuals."<sup>4</sup> Among the 27 petitioners, some must have felt that Maneckji Cursetji's rejection was unfair and contrary to masonic universalism. However, it also appears that while many British masons were not necessarily opposed to allowing Indians to join freemasonry, many were very much opposed to sharing the space of their own lodge with them. This might explain why Maneckji Cursetji was blackballed twice, and also why the need to create a lodge specifically for natives was felt, divided along racial lines. Either way, the constitution of lodge *Rising Star of Western India* provided a firm foundation for the eligibility of natives and allowed an unprecedented number of them to join.

There is no evidence to suggest that the new lodge involved any protest whatsoever. In effect, it satisfied most parties as an easy way out from the tension generated by the contradiction between the masonic universalist ideal and the local lodges' exclusive practices. Only those masons who chose to be associated with the natives would do so. Initially, the officers of the lodge were all European. Besides, visiting also provided for a level of diversity, a practice best illustrated by the Viscount de Brons Cézérac, hailing from lodge *L'Anglaise* No. 204, Bordeaux, France, who visited the lodge in 1852.<sup>5</sup> Yet, *Rising Star of Western India* was forbidden from initiating Europeans, which meant that the racial distinction would be maintained. By 1857, all officers were Indian. Clearly, this meant that the mainstream lodges could remain the preserve of Europeans and lodge *Rising Star of Western India*, the preserve of Indians only. Attempts were later made to allow the lodge to initiate Europeans, but failed. In 1849, Maneckji Cursetji moved a resolution "to empower us to receive European as well as Native candidates for Masonry into our lodge."<sup>6</sup> This resolution was however denied on account of the agreement not to do so, when the lodge was created. Conversely, several members of lodge *Rising Star of Western India* No. 342, were very prone to complain about the European lodges of the Province taking the initiative of opening up to native candidates.<sup>7</sup> This illustrates the growing divide between 'European masonry'

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<sup>3</sup> Best embodied by the governor-generalships of William Bentinck (1828-1835) and James Ramsay Marquess of Dalhousie (1848-1856)

<sup>4</sup> D.F. Wadia, *History of Lodge Rising Star of Western India No. 342 S. C.* (Bombay: British India Press, 1912), 8.

<sup>5</sup> D.F. Wadia, *History of Lodge Rising Star of Western India No. 342 S. C.* (Bombay: British India Press, 1912), 87.

<sup>6</sup> D.F. Wadia, *History of Lodge Rising Star of Western India No. 342 S. C.* (Bombay: British India Press, 1912), 62.

<sup>7</sup> This was the case in 1866, when Lodge St. Andrews in the East No. 343 initiated a number of natives, when it was, according to the complaining brothers "not in a position to know the characters and qualifications of the natives of Bombay [...] should not be allowed to open its portals to them, and that a representation should be made to the Provincial Grand Lodge.

and 'native freemasonry' among the lodges of Bombay.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the creation of a 'native lodge', by opposition to 'European lodges' created a precedent for a form of Freemasonry that accommodated racial distinctions.

Between 1843 and 1893, another 8 native lodges were constituted across British India, 7 of which were constituted in Bombay, which tends to suggest that the phenomenon took a unique precedence in that city. By 1873, Bombay totalled 15 lodges, 7 European, 5 native, 3 mixed. While the Scottish lodges had fully come to terms with the eligibility of Parsi candidates, the English lodges were still doubtful. In May 1863, the English District Grand Lodge of Bombay sent a letter to the United Grand Lodge of England in which it asked for instructions upon two points: "- Whether Parsees are eligible for initiation? - Whether Hindoos were eligible for Initiation?"<sup>9</sup> The colonial report sent in reply by the United Grand Lodge of England confirmed the eligibility of the Parsis.<sup>10</sup> The first native lodge under English constitution in Bombay was opened in 1867 by 11 Parsis and 2 Mahomedans<sup>11</sup>. It was named *Eastern Star* No. 1189. Some of the founders were previously members of Lodge *Concord* No. 757, a 'mixed' lodge. The fact they felt the need to create a lodge of their own would tend to confirm the growing fallback reaction of Bombay masons<sup>12</sup>. By then, it had become clear that Parsis were by far the best Indian candidates for freemasonry in the eyes of the British. There were two reasons to this: first, their cult was monotheistic, second, they were held in high esteem by the British with whom they were involved as commercial and administrative partners. This also explains why the Parsis were involved in the opening of the next two native lodges in Bombay, lodge *Rising Sun* No. 506 S.C. (out of the 23 members 22 were Parsi) and lodge *Cyrus* No. 1359, E.C., in 1871. Lodge *Cyrus* was somewhat different from all the previous native lodges. The fact it was named after one of the founders of the Persian Kingdom, would have made it more evocative to the Parsis than to any other Indian community. While all previous 'native lodges' had been opened 'for natives', we are left wondering whether lodge *Cyrus* was not open specifically 'for Parsis', which leads me to my second part.

## ***II - From Native Lodges to Denominational Lodges***

When the first two native lodges were opened in Bombay, nothing in their constitution seemed to suggest that they were designed for any religious community in particular. Of course, the constitution of *Lodge Rising Star of Western India* had been prompted by the struggle of a Parsi, and the overwhelming majority of its members

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<sup>8</sup> The figures confirm this. By 1871, out of the 14 lodges active in Bombay, 7 were European, 4 were native and 3 were mixed, knowing that the number of native lodges would keep on increasing

<sup>9</sup> *Letter written by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Bombay to the United Grand Lodge of England, 13th May 1864* (United Grand Lodge of England: Indian Correspondence, Unreferenced Material): It is noteworthy that the initiation of Muslim candidates no longer seemed to be an issue. While the authors of the letter seemed to be rather well-disposed to the Parsees, the initiation of Hindoos was seen as highly controversial because "even those of them who say they do not approve of Idolatry are so trammelled with caste that they are forced to perform idolatrous rites."

<sup>10</sup> J.S. Hopwood and James Mason, 'Report of the Colonial Board', *The Masonic Record of Western India* 1.1 (1865): 364: The response of the United Grand Lodge of England came in January 1865, under the form of a colonial report, in which it was established that: "The Parsees present many points of contrast to the Hindoos, and it cannot be denied that the advantages of the comparison are on the side of the former."

<sup>11</sup> Jehangir Framroz Shroff, *Centenary Celebrations of the Cyrus Lodge No. 1359 E.C., Consecrated on 28th Mar August 1871* (Bombay, 1972) 1.

<sup>12</sup> Jehangir Framroz Shroff, *Centenary Celebrations of the Cyrus Lodge No. 1359 E.C., Consecrated on 28th Mar August 1871* (Bombay, 1972) 1.

were Parsis. But at the very first meeting of the lodge, a Muslim had also been initiated. The situation changed, however, with the constitution of the following native lodges, which were no longer based on racial affiliation, but rather on religious affiliation.

When lodge Cyrus No. 1359 E.C. was opened, in 1871, its very name seemed to indicate that it was meant, or at least targeted at Parsi candidates, especially as the majority of the founders were Parsi<sup>13</sup>. However, the following year, the lodge initiated 4 Hindus, proving that even though it was obviously aimed at the Parsi community, it was not sectarian.<sup>14</sup> In fact, this is quite remarkable as very few Hindus had been initiated to freemasonry across the Indian provinces. In this sense, lodge *Cyrus* testified to its spirit of openness and contributed to the promotion of masonic universality.

However, the four Hindus who had joined lodge *Cyrus* in 1872 then moved on to becoming the founders of a lodge specifically intended for the initiation of Hindus, Lodge *Aryan* No. 1709 E.C. This also tends to suggest that they were community-driven in the sense that they felt the need to congregate according to their creed. Hindus had long been deprived from entering freemasonry. Their polytheism had often been denounced and the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny made it worse. The colonial report which was sent to the Bombay brethren in 1865 testifies to this prejudice: "How can western ideas make their way amongst a people, whose superstitions so kindle their suspicions, that a greased cartridge may become the cause of a general rebellion?"<sup>15</sup>

This obvious hostility might well explain why some Hindus chose to congregate on the basis of their religious affiliation, in Bombay but also in Calcutta. The most emblematic case is that of lodge *Anchor and Hope* No. 234, the lodge in which P. C. Dutt, one of the first Hindus to gain access to freemasonry, was initiated in 1872<sup>16</sup>. Following his initiation, a number of Hindu candidates applied to the lodge and were initiated. As early as 1876, lodge *Anchor and Hope* is mentioned in the minutes of the District Grand Lodge of Bengal in as "principally consisting of Hindu Brethren"<sup>17</sup>. How are we to interpret this phenomenon? Naturally, the Hindus, who had been debarred from freemasonry now knew that the lodge *Anchor and Hope* was the safest way to enter freemasonry. At the same time, the transition from a mixed race lodge to an essentially 'native lodge' could be interpreted as the consequence of a growing sense of communalism; that is to say a growing focus on religious community rather than universal brotherhood.

The fact confessional lodges sprang up in the 1870s is no mere coincidence. Historians such as Jim Masselos have situated the emergence of the view according to which Muslims and Hindus were two different communities with conflicting interests in the 1870s. By then the existing native lodges had mainly served the interests of the Parsis. But by the 1870s a growing number of Muslims and Hindus started joining, and as they were developing a stronger sense of their own identity, the 'confessional lodge' seems to have become the norm.

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13 Jehangir Framroz Shroff, *Centenary Celebrations of the Cyrus Lodge No. 1359 E.C., Consecrated on 28th Mar August 1871* (Bombay, 1972) 13.

14 Jehangir Framroz Shroff, *Centenary Celebrations of the Cyrus Lodge No. 1359 E.C., Consecrated on 28th Mar August 1871* (Bombay, 1972) 16. The four Hindus were Shantaram Narayan, high court advocate, Bala Mangesh Wagle, Ghanasham Nilkanth Nadkarni, and DR. Shantaram Vithal Sanzgiri, medical practitioner.

15 J.S. Hopwood and James Mason, 'Report of the Colonial Board', *The Masonic Record of Western India* 1.1 (1865): 364.

16 Prosonno Coomarr Dutt, *How Hindus were admitted into the mysteries of freemasonry and a short Masonic career of the first Hindu mason* (Calcutta, 1900) 1. (United Grand Lodge of England: NJE 68 DUT)

17 "Quarterly Communication on Saturday 24th June 1879", In, *Proceedings of the District Grand Lodge of Bengal* (United Grand Lodge of England: NJE 160 BEN).

Confirmation of this can be found in the reaction of lodge *Rising Star of Western India* to the creation of lodge *Islam* No. 490 S.C. in 1876. Members of the lodge deplored the fact "native lodges were not consulted in the matter"<sup>18</sup>. Of course, the hostility of the Parsis of lodge *Rising Star of Western India* is related to the Parsi-Muslim riots that had taken place two years before, in 1874, exacerbating the tensions between the two communities<sup>19</sup>. Besides, the Parsis involved in the protest were not all favourable to the constitution of a lodge aimed at a particular confession. Lodge *Islam* had been created for Muslims, and some members of *Rising Star of Western India* claimed that the establishment of a sectarian lodge was "subversive of the noble principles of freemasonry and that it was absurd to found a lodge for a particular sect exclusively"<sup>20</sup>. Clearly, the constitution of a 'confessional lodge' was thought by some to be in contradiction with Freemasonry's universality, and its ambition to create a space that would transcend the national, religious and social distinctions of the outside world. In fact, several members of lodge *Islam* had originally been initiated in *Rising Star of Western India*, which further confirms its confessional character. By then, there were 6 native lodges in Bombay and the 'native lodge' model was spreading to the other Indian masonic districts, as we shall now see.

### **III - Indian Lodges at the Turn of the Century: A Complex Picture**

In the last decades of the 19th century, the masonic scene in Bombay was rather eclectic and fraught with contradictions. Many lodges remained entirely composed of Europeans. This trend was fully supported by the Grand Lodge of Scottish Freemasonry in India. In 1888, the district grand officers recommended that a clear separation be maintained between 'native freemasonry' and European freemasonry: "that as Lodges intended specially for natives exist, the utmost care and caution should be exercised before the initiation of Natives into the Bombay lodges composed principally or entirely of European Brethren."<sup>21</sup> There were also English lodges, such as *St. George*, one of the most prestigious lodges in Bombay, that restricted their membership to Europeans only. Ironically, lodge *Perseverance*, which had originally refused to open its doors to Maneckji Cursetji, initiated a number of natives in the 1880s.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, native lodges, both confessional and non-confessional continued to thrive in Bombay, as in the other Indian Masonic districts.

The district of Madras witnessed the emergence of its first native lodge, lodge *Carnatic* No. 2031, in 1883. The lodge was constituted by 12 natives of different creeds, many of whom were Hindu. Interestingly they were all members of existing mixed lodges.<sup>23</sup> The fact they chose to open a lodge dedicated to Indian members of the Craft

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18 D.F. Wadia, *History of Lodge Rising Star of Western India No. 342 S. C.* (Bombay: British India Press, 1912), 200.

19 Vahid Jalil Fozdar, *Constructing the "Brother": Freemasonry, Empire and Nationalism in India, 1840-1925* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, USA, 2001) 457.

20 D.F. Wadia, *History of Lodge Rising Star of Western India No. 342 S. C.* (Bombay: British India Press, 1912), 201.

21 "Quarterly Communication of the 28th day of July 1888", In, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of all Scottish Freemasonry in India, Bombay, 1886-1909* (United Grand Lodge of England: NJS 140 IND).

22 *By-laws of Lodge Perseverance No. 338 (S.C.): to which are added a brief history of the lodge, list of members, etc* (United Grand Lodge of England: NJS 166 (338) PER). This included including Ardesher Khardetji and Ardesher Navroji Daver in 1882, or Sadamank Trimbak Bhandare in 1889.

clearly shows that they were dissatisfied with the treatment they received in the existing lodges. The letter sent by Pulney Andy, one of the founders, tends to confirm this interpretation: "It is generally reported that natives do not find easy admission into freemasonry, and that many of our native brethren who were fortunate enough to be admitted to that privilege, on finding that they had no chance for further advancement, were obliged to disconnect themselves to form a new lodge for the special benefit of our countrymen."<sup>24</sup> Opening a native lodge was thus a means to deprive the mainstream lodges from the power of standing in the way of native initiation. Under those circumstances, the native lodge could contribute to furthering masonic universality. Precisely, Pulney Andy saw the new lodge as a means of: "levelling all differences of race feelings between the rulers and the ruled" in the name of "the bond of Universal Brotherhood."<sup>25</sup> The practice, however, was somewhat different from the rhetoric. At the consecration banquet, the Indian members took their refreshments apart from the European visiting brethren<sup>26</sup>. That being said, the lodge was a model of plurality in the sense that it was composed of Indians of all creeds, including Christians. This was not the case of Lodge *Hyderabad* No. 587 S.C. founded in the district of Madras in 1893. Like lodge *Carnatic*, it was founded by the Indian members of mixed lodges. However, it differed from lodge *Carnatic* insofar as it was "formed by Muhammadan brothers only"<sup>27</sup>, giving it a denominational dimension, and its ritual was conducted in Urdu, a language historically associated with the Muslims of India, thus confirming its denominational dimension.

Back in Bombay, the last native lodge of the 19th century, Lodge *Zoroaster* No. 800 S.C., was also clearly denominational and also rather exclusive. The fact it was named after Zoroaster, the prophet of the Parsis, and that its motto was the parsi watchword *Humata, Hukhta, Hwarshata* (Pure thoughts, pure words and pure deeds) is proof enough. <sup>28</sup> The Parsis who founded it clearly meant it as a celebration of their creed. Moreover, except from the first European Grand Master, all other masters throughout the colonial era were Parsi, and so was every single member of the lodge.<sup>29</sup> In that sense, lodge *Zoroaster* was probably the closest to being a sectarian lodge, because being a Parsi was a condition for becoming a member.

Yet, despite the constitution of Lodge *Zoroaster*, the archives of Freemasonry for that time also reveal that growing pressures were being exerted by colonial administrators and masonic officials, especially at the Grand Lodge level, to open more mixed lodges. As the political relationship between Britons and Indians was becoming increasingly more complicated, Freemasonry was put forward as a means to mediate those tensions. In 1893, Lord Saltoun, the Substitute Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, then on tour in India, observed that native integration was: "a matter of

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<sup>23</sup> Lodge *Perfect Unanimity*, Lodge of Universal Charity, Lodge Pitt MacDonald, and John Miller Lodge to be more precise

<sup>24</sup> T. V. Muthukrishnan, *History of the Carnatic Lodge No. 2031 E.C., 1883-1993* (Madras, 1933) 6.

<sup>25</sup> T. V. Muthukrishnan, *History of the Carnatic Lodge No. 2031 E.C., 1883-1993* (Madras, 1933) 10.

<sup>26</sup> T. V. Muthukrishnan, *History of the Carnatic Lodge No. 2031 E.C., 1883-1993* (Madras, 1933) 13. Besides, Besides, as late as 1901, lodge *Carnatic* remained a "purely native lodge" in the words of Lord Amptill, the District Grand Master of Madras, who paid a visit to the lodge the same year.

<sup>27</sup> *The Freemason* [en ligne] (June 1899): 1. Disponible sur Masonic Periodicals Online: <http://www.masonicperiodicals.org/>

<sup>28</sup> "Quarterly Communication 28th April 1894", In, *Proceedings of the District Grand Lodge of Bombay* (United Grand Lodge of England: NJE 160 BOM fol.). The list of founders provides confirmation of this. It was originally constituted by 22 masons, 4 Europeans and 18 Parsis.

<sup>29</sup> Vahid Jalil Fozdar, *Constructing the "Brother": Freemasonry, Empire and Nationalism in India, 1840-1925* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, USA, 2001) 458

infinite interest, but also, I think, a matter of infinite congratulation because both the race who are so-called 'the rulers' and the race who are so-called 'the ruled' are all brought into the same absolute and perfect unity of brotherhood and equality."<sup>30</sup> A few years later, in 1900, Lord Sanhurst, who was both Governor of Bombay and District Grand Master of Bombay, E.C., pronounced a farewell speech that clearly spelt out the instrumentality that freemasonry was to have in consolidating the Empire: "The more opportunities we [Britons and Indians] get of being brought together in India and thoroughly understanding one another the better it will be for all of us [...] the more recruits we can get into our masonic Camp, the firmer we shall be knitted together as faithful and patriotic subjects of the Queen."<sup>31</sup> This growing insistence on the role of freemasonry in cementing the Empire accounts for the increasing number of mixed lodges at the turn of the century, most notably lodge *Imperial Brotherhood* No. 1041 S.C., founded in 1908, which aimed at bringing Indians and Europeans together under the auspices of masonic brotherhood, in order to "vivify the Imperial idea, by giving it practical application under Masonic guidance."<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

In assessing freemasonry's potential for native integration, and the measures taken to achieve it, we need to keep in mind that the masonic lodge was one of the only social venues, if not the only one, in which Indians and Europeans could sit side by side.<sup>33</sup> This applies first and foremost to mixed race lodges and to a lesser extent to 'native lodges' which generally had a significant number of European affiliates. Looking at the global picture of native participation in colonial India clearly shows that more natives were admitted in the second half of the 19th century. The native lodges obviously contributed to this trend, by facilitating their entry and reinforcing the idea that they were eligible. At the Quarterly Communication of the Grand Lodge of All Scottish Freemasonry in India, held in Bombay on 25th March 1899, more than half the officers were Indian.<sup>34</sup>

And yet, the first native lodge was born out of the refusal by a local lodge to initiate a native. In that sense, the native lodge was a compromise, because it provided for native participation while allowing the prejudiced lodges to remain so, therefore upholding, or at least condoning racial cleavages. Over time, the battle for native admission gradually shifted to be fought on account of religious affiliation. This was mainly due to the fact the response given by masonic authorities systematically consisted in opposing one community to the other, classifying them in terms of how compatible they were with the Freemasonry. <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Quarterly Communication 6th April 1893", In, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of All Scottish Freemasonry in India* (United Grand Lodge of England: NJS 140 IND). The same year, Bro. the Reverend George Oliver, a much acclaimed historian of freemasonry wrote a letter to Lodge Rising Star of Western Indian, thanking the members for his honorary membership, and expressing his enthusiasm at the idea that native participation may "cement the native and European population into one happy people as children of the same parent, governed by the same laws, and partners in the same beneficent institutions."

<sup>31</sup> Quarterly Communication 12th February 1900", In, *Proceedings of the District Grand Lodge of Bombay* (United Grand Lodge of England: NJE 160 BOM fol.)

<sup>32</sup> Lodge 'Imperial Brotherhood', No. 1041, (S.C.): Golden Jubilee Souvenir (Bombay, 1958) 30. (UGLE)

<sup>33</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in India." *The Journal of British Studies* 40.4 (2001): 489-521.

<sup>34</sup> "Quarterly Communication 25th March 1899", In, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of All Scottish Freemasonry in India* (United Grand Lodge of England: NJS 140 IND).

Much in the same way as women, the "irreligious Libertine" and "the stupid Atheist", Indians were long excluded from Freemasonry.<sup>36</sup> Despite the universalist ideal it was based on, masonic fraternalism was limited from the start. But over time those limits evolved. This is very important because it makes the historical context particularly relevant to the study of freemasonry. At the same time, it proves that the boundaries of masonic fraternalism are not immutable, that they can always be pushed back to further the cause of diversity, as they were in the case of Indian freemasonry.

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35 Cécile Révauger, *Noirs et francs-maçons* (Paris: Editions Maçonniques de France, 2003) 293.

36 Cécile Révauger, *Noirs et francs-maçons* (Paris: Editions Maçonniques de France, 2003) 293.